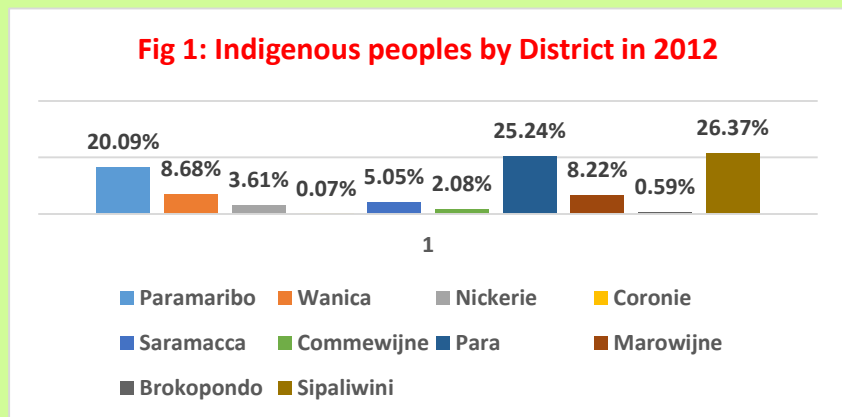


FACT SHEET BASELINE STUDY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN SURINAME

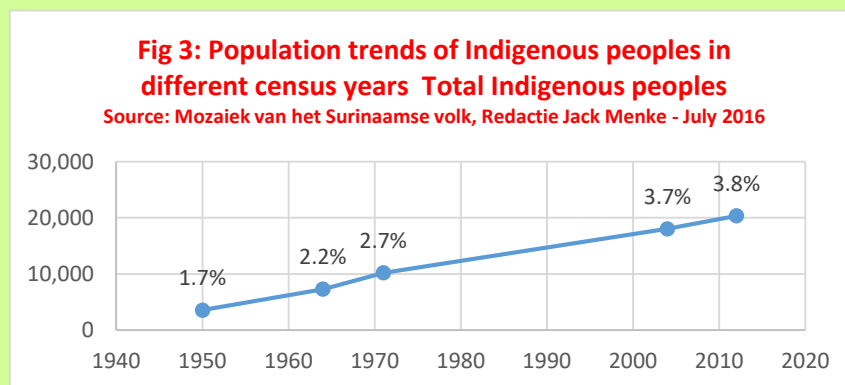
The Baseline Study is part of a 3-year project of the Indigenous Navigator (IN) that from 2017 on is carried out in the following 11 countries: Bangladesh, Bolivia, Cambodia, Cameroon, Colombia, Kenya, Nepal, Peru, Philippines, Suriname and Tanzania. The IN is a framework with a range of tools for Indigenous peoples (IPs) to track and monitor progress in recognizing and enforcing their rights. It is designed in such a way that IPs, as primary stakeholders, can investigate for themselves whether their rights are being respected. The IN is a collaborative initiative of a consortium of six organizations and is supported by the European Union.

In Suriname the IN project is carried out by the Association of Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname (VIDS). VIDS is the umbrella organization of village leaders of all Indigenous villages in Suriname. Since 2001 VIDS receives support from their technical and administrative office, Bureau VIDS, which helps prepare and implement VIDS policies and strategies. For the compilation of the IN baseline study, Bureau VIDS collected information and data from primary and secondary sources. The Navigator survey was conducted in 14 of the total of 52 villages registered with VIDS, with a total estimated population of 4,477.

Demographic data on Suriname's Indigenous population dates back to the most recent 2012 population census, conducted by the General Bureau of Statistics. The Indigenous population then counted 20,344 persons or 3.8% of the total population of 541,6381. Figure 1 shows that the majority of the IPs lived in three of the ten districts



of Suriname, namely in Paramaribo, Para and Sipaliwini, which together had 71% (14,585) Indigenous inhabitants. Wanica and Marowijne were in second place with a total population of 17%. An estimated 65% of the IPs live in village communities, the rest are spread over individual households in Suriname.



Population trends from different census years show that the population grew steadily between 1950 and 2012. In 1950 the IPs comprised 1.7% of the Surinamese population and in 2012 they grew to 3.8%. The years measured were 1950, 1964, 1971, 2004 and 2012.

The four largest IPs in Suriname are the Kari'na (Carib), Lokono (Arawak), Trio (Tirio, Tareno) and Wayana. Official demographics on the size of each community are lacking. The communities themselves do not keep demographic data per village. This is partly due to strong migration trends and the fact that everyone who belongs to the village is counted, regardless of their place of residence.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

1. **Means of support.** To provide for their basic necessities, the IPs of the forest rely on small-scale agriculture, gathering of food and herbs, forestry, fishing, hunting and crafts. The dependence on self-sufficiency is strongest among the isolated communities in South Suriname who can only reach the city by plane.
2. **Poverty.** 65.4% of the IPs are poor and another 18.1% semi-poor. They are the second poorest group in Suriname after the Maroon villagers.
3. **Employment status and income.** The majority of Indigenous breadwinners were employed by private companies or NGOs (42.9%), government (21.6%) or self-employed (20.6%) during the 2012 Census.
4. **Preschool education.** Participation in pre-school education (ECE) for 3-4 years old was 36.6% in 2018 and is a notable improvement compared to previous years.
5. **Primary education.** At the start of the 2017/18 school year, 95.7% of children attended Primary Education, the second lowest percentage compared to other population groups, including 95.9% boys and 95.4% girls.
6. **Literacy.** The literacy rate was 94.4% among Indigenous women and 96% among men in 2018; it was a reflection of primary education received in the previous 30-40 years. Lower secondary education (MULO) was the highest level for the majority of women and men followed by upper secondary. Participation in higher education was 7.7% among women and 0% among men.

Table 3: Percentage of women and men age 15-49 by highest level of school and literacy

Sex	Total #	ECE, Pre-primary and none		Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary	Higher	Missing		Total % literate
		Literate	Illiterate	Literate	Literate	Literate	Literate	Literate	Illiterate	
Female	278	0.7	5.0	27.3	46.3	12.3	7.7	0.1	0.6	94.4%
Male	101	0.6	4.0	24.6	54.1	16.5	0.0	0.2	0.0	96.0%

Source: Suriname MICS 2018

7. **Health.** Today, lifestyle diseases are the most common in the Indigenous villages, i.e. hypertension, diabetes mellitus and chronic stomach upset.
8. **Medical insurance.** It turned out that 63% of men and 72% of women had medical insurance. In most cases women had social insurance from the state (51%), and men from their employer (50.5%).
9. **Child vaccination and mortality.** In babies 12-23 months, 76.4% had received HepB at birth, 88.1% Polio (IPV), 93.7% OPV2 and 85.6% OPV3. The number who had none was 4%. The declared possession of a vaccination card was 96.9%, of which 88.6% was verified.
10. **Child mortality.** IPs had the lowest under 5 year child mortality rate in the country, namely 3 per 1000 born alive.
11. **Adolescent fertility rate.** Adolescents had the highest fertility rate of 124 in Suriname, making teenage motherhood the most common in this group.
12. **Child marriage.** Marriage or marital union before the ages of 15 and 18 years was high among IPs.

NATIONAL LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The legal and policy framework for improving the rights and conditions of Indigenous and tribal peoples in Suriname is very weak. There is little political will to implement structural legal, policy and institutional changes so there is no concrete and visible progress. Incidental actions and projects can certainly be called positive but do not result in a coordinated policy approach to guarantee structural and sustainable improvements.

- 1. ILO Convention nr. 169 (1989).** Suriname has not signed the Convention. This Convention describes essential measures and special rights for the protection, free expression and development of IPs in all necessary areas, both general and specific, including culture, religion, social, economic and land distribution.
- 2. UNDRIP, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.** Suriname voted for its approval in 2007, but as of December 2020, there are no specific laws in force to enact Indigenous rights in accordance with this.
- 3. Collective property right of land.** The so-called "land rights" are not legally recognized. Nine year after the installation in 2011 of a "Land Rights working group" and later presidential commissions on the rights of Indigenous and tribal peoples there are still no laws protecting Indigenous peoples. 2013 also saw the establishment of the "Bureau Land Rights" which died a silent death.
- 4. Directorate 'Sustainable Development of IPs (DDOI).** By order of 19 October 2016 no. 6595 and with the publication in State Decree 2016 no. 127, the Directorate was officially established in December 2016. The Directorate consists of 3 subsidiary directorates and it is responsible for developing programs, projects and activities for improving housing and living conditions and building the capacity of Indigenous communities.
- 5. Presidential Commission on Land Rights Issues of Indigenous Peoples in Suriname.** In December 2016 the President established this Commission followed by the installation in March 2017 of the "Presidential Commission on Land Rights Issues of Tribal Peoples in Suriname". Both Committees jointly developed the "Roadmap for legal recognition of the Land Rights of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Suriname" which contains proposals to resolve the issue of land rights. The President ordered its implementation on June 29, 2018. On November 30, 2018 the Minister of Regional Development installed a Management Team, a secretariat and three committees for the implementation of the Roadmap. Representatives of the traditional authority of both the Indigenous and tribal peoples sat in each of these organs.
- 6. Law on Protected Village Areas.** On December 22, 2017, the National Assembly (DNA) approved this draft law containing further amendments to the Decree on the Principles of Land Policy (SB 1982 no.10). The Act aims for a better protection of the people in the interior and it is a precursor to the Collective Rights Act. As of December 2020, the President had not yet signed the Act. A decisive reason for this were the serious objections of Indigenous (including VIDS) and Maroon (tribal) organizations against this law.
- 7. Draft Law on Collective Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples.** This draft law was submitted for approval of the National Assembly as an initiative bill of the DNA itself on 8 April 2020 and has yet to be approved. The aim is to provide legal recognition and protection of collective rights, traditional authority and governance and free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of the Indigenous and tribal peoples of Suriname.

MAIN CHALLENGES AND GAPS

- 1. Legal recognition as a people.** The existence of Indigenous and tribal peoples in Suriname as a people and collectivity is not legally recognized. Legal proceedings of these peoples are thus impossible, because they "do not exist" by law and have no legally established rights.
- 2. Land rights.** The legal enactment of Indigenous land rights is crucial but not yet realized. For example, there is no obligation to give Indigenous or tribal communities a say in the issuing or re-allocation of land in their habitats. A representative geographic map with all Indigenous villages is missing.
- 3. Environmental protection.** Suriname has no specific up-to-date environmental law for the regulation of contemporary environmental threats and their consequences for people and nature. The most poignant example is the admitted use of mercury in gold mining, which poisons entire inland communities without effective measures against it. There is also no law requiring ESIA (Environmental and Social Impact Assessment) studies. Furthermore, the outdated legislation does not provide for the lawful use by Indigenous and tribal communities of the nature reserves overlapping Indigenous habitats, thus making them lawbreakers and intruders when hunting, fishing or gathering material in their habitats.
- 4. Consent and guardianship.** Suriname does not have FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent) legislation. FPIC is a specific right for IPs' participation recognized in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). It allows them to agree or decline a project that may affect them or their territories.
- 5. Sustainable Development Goals.** The SDGs were adopted by the United Nations and Suriname in 2015 and they must be achieved by 2030. This 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development uses the slogan "Leave no one behind". The SDGs require a proactive policy to explicitly involve Indigenous and tribal peoples, among others, in order to catch up on development gaps. In Suriname this hardly happens. It is unclear which authorities are responsible for the implementation of the SDGs and, as far as is known, only information activities at superficial level are carried out.
- 6. Subordination and marginalization.** There is structural deprivation and marginalization of the IPs. This has also been confirmed in the rulings of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), which monitors compliance. There is no legislation or policy framework for the recognition and protection of sacred or historic sites of Indigenous and tribal peoples, nor for their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge.
- 7. Flaws and errors in data provision.** The General Bureau of Statistics which collects census data, does not provide data on the number of inhabitants of the villages or specifications per tribe, with the consequence that no exact development planning can take place. In official publications IPs are categorized under "other" population groups. As a result reports produced on IPs by domestic and foreign agencies indicate different and incorrect inhabitant percentages on their areas of residence.
- 8. Economic situation and data.** Accurate statements about traditional and other economic incomes and activities in various sectors cannot be made or monitored. This is mostly because – apart from missing data – no assessment is made of what IPs themselves give values to.
- 9. Infrastructure.** Medical, education, water and sanitation, communications and many other basic services are deficient in most Indigenous villages.